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BIBLE PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTING.

VOLTAIRE'S famous prediction that in a hundred years the Bible would be totally unknown has proved as ludicrously wrong as that other noted saying of his—that although it took twelve men to establish Christianity, it would require only one to overthrow it. More than a century has elapsed since Voltaire's time, and so far from being an unknown book, the Bible is now circulating over the whole world in numbers and in forms such as in the days of the Ferney Philosopher nobody had ever dreamed of. Voltaire died in 1778. Within about the first quarter of the next century, during which the circulation of the Bible was to dwindle and die out altogether, there was established in London the British and Foreign Bible Society, which alone since its institution has circulated, according to last year's accounts, over one hundred and forty-seven million Bibles, or Testaments, or portions of them, and is still pouring them out all over the earth at the rate of about four millions a year, or thirteen thousand copies for every working day, more than a quarter of a century after the date at which the sceptical Frenchman prophesied that the book would be wholly extinct.

Nobody seems to know even approximately what is the total output of Bibles at the present time. There are reckoned to be about seventy centres of production and distribution, but what is the extent of their work there are no means of ascertaining. Of distributing associations there are four principal ones—the British and Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society, the Scotch, and the Dutch. Of these the London Society is by far the largest. It is managed by a committee of thirty-six laymen, six of whom are foreigners resident in or near London. Of the remaining thirty, half are members of the Church of England, and the other half are representatives of other Christian communions. It has a gross income of about a quarter of a million of money. The societies affiliated with it in

various parts of the world—collecting funds and aiding in the circulation of its sacred books—number over seven thousand. It has its own agents, dépôts, and colporteurs all over Europe, and throughout India, China, and other countries. Of colporteurs alone it employs nearly six hundred in various parts of the world, and it has between four and five hundred Bible-women engaged in bringing the Bible and a knowledge of the Bible to the women of the Eastern world. It issues its publications in over three hundred different languages, and there are at the present time not far short of a thousand men, missionaries and others, engaged in making other translations, or improving existing ones.

This society has been the pioneer in the work, and is by far the largest in its operations. The American, Scotch, and Dutch have followed in its wake, though the American not only distributes the Scriptures, but 'manufactures' its books. The British and Foreign Bible Society does no printing in English, except what is done for the blind in raised type. All its issues in English are printed by the presses at Oxford and Cambridge, and by the Queen's printers.

The copyright in the Holy Scriptures is vested in the crown, and in England there are only the three authorised printers of them just named. Oxford and Cambridge have, by royal charter, the right of printing the Bible, and the Queen's printers are licensed to print the sacred books during Her Majesty's pleasure, a license which may at any time be withdrawn by an Order in Council. In Scotland anybody is at liberty to print Bibles, but no edition may be lawfully published unless it has been read and licensed for publication.

All this, however, refers only to the 'authorised' version of the Scriptures. The expenses attending the recent revision of the sacred books were very heavy—something like £20,000, and the Queen's printers, who were invited to contribute a share, preferred not to do so. The two great universities alone, therefore, have proprietary rights in the revised version of the Bible,

and all editions of it emanate from the Oxford and Cambridge presses. It is a remarkable fact that although the revised Scriptures have now been before the public for fifteen years, the old or authorised version is still the one in general use. The revised Bible was produced at immense cost, and by the highest scholarship of the day, and no competent judge is likely to dispute that it is a more accurate, and upon the whole, a better translation than the authorised version. Yet the Oxford Press still annually prints at least five times as many of the old version as it does of the new, and Cambridge does practically the same. One of the chief reasons for this is that the great society we have been describing—the British and Foreign—has hitherto declined to circulate the revised version. It is a fundamental rule of the society to issue nothing but the authorised version of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, and though this rule was of course framed when the authorised version was the best, that rule remains unreppealed, though attempts have been made to get it amended so far as to permit of the distribution of the new translation to those who prefer it. The slow acceptance of the new version is after all, however, only a repetition of what was experienced when the authorised version itself first appeared. People still clung to the old translation to which they had been accustomed, and it took two or three generations to bring the newer one into popular favour.

Among the Bible printing establishments of the world the Clarendon Press at Oxford holds the position corresponding to that of the British and Foreign Society among distributing agencies. It is by far the largest of its kind in existence. The Clarendon Press is a remarkable institution in many ways, especially if we include with it the various branch establishments connected with it. It is itself a large wholesale publishing establishment, having extensive premises in London, and branch depôts in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and New York, and it has its travellers in all parts of the kingdom. The Clarendon Press not only prints, but it casts all its own type, does its own stereotyping and electrotyping, makes its own printing-ink and its own paper. It also carries on a large establishment for the binding of the volumes it prints. In one way and another it has about a thousand people regularly engaged in the production of books, of which Bibles form by far the greater proportion.

The paper-making for Oxford Bibles is a specially important and interesting part of the work. At Wolvercote, a mile or two out of Oxford, the university has a large mill for the supply of its own requirements. A good deal of the paper they turn out here is made out of old ships' sails, the materials of which, after battling with storms in all quarters of the world, come here for the purpose of being made into paper, printed in almost every language under heaven, and bound up into volumes to be again scattered far and wide into all the uttermost ends of the earth. This Wolvercote paper-mill has much to do with the great reputation that Oxford has acquired in the production of Bibles and other devotional books. Twenty years ago and more the management here hit on a valuable

invention in paper-making, and ever since their 'India paper' has been the envy and the puzzle of manufacturers all over the kingdom. There are said to be only three persons living who know the secret of its make; and though the process has never been legally protected, and all the world is free to imitate the extremely thin but thoroughly opaque and wonderfully strong and durable paper of the best Oxford Bibles if they only knew how, all the world has hitherto quite failed to do so. It is as thin as tissue, but perfectly opaque, and so strong that a strip of it three inches wide has proved to be capable of sustaining a quarter of a hundredweight. Over one hundred and sixty works and editions are now printed on this paper. This special advantage has very largely helped Oxford to retain the leading position which it originally gained by being nearly the first if not quite the first printer of books in the kingdom, and by the prestige of its name. A very extensive and most interesting establishment is this, the chief source of our sacred books in their material embodiment—spacious, well-ordered, dignified, and in some respects a trifle conservative. Some of its machines are of a somewhat antiquated type, but they print and send up to the London depôt from four to seven tons of printed sheets every day, and the smartness with which they can, if required, turn out their books, was illustrated at the time of the Caxton quincentenary a few years ago. A meeting was to be held in honour of Caxton at South Kensington, and at two o'clock on the morning of the day the printing of a hundred Bibles was commenced at the Clarendon Press. By two o'clock in the afternoon a complete copy was handed up on to the platform at the meeting. It was a book of over one thousand pages, and it had been printed, dried, pressed, sent up to the bindery in London, and there collated, sewn, rolled, and bound. Its edges had been gilt, and the cover embossed with the university arms, and it had travelled seventy miles all within the twelve hours. They have modernised a good deal of their machinery since then, and if they were attempting a similar feat again, it is said that there would be ample time to make the paper as well as the book.

Of Bibles alone this one establishment turns out at the present time over a million a year, in addition to large numbers of New Testaments and portions of Scripture, and both the university of Cambridge and Messrs Eyre and Spottiswoode, the Queen's printers, also print very largely. From all three sources the printed matter is to a large extent sent to the British and Foreign Bible Society in sheets, the society having them bound up by their own bookbinders, this item alone costing the society from £2000 to £3000 a month. The university has, however, an extensive 'bindery' in London, and its own large publishing house in Paternoster Row, the university publisher being Mr Henry Frowde, whose name has been printed more frequently and circulated more widely, probably, than that of any other man who ever lived. Cambridge University also has a publishing press in the same locality, while the Bibles issued by the Queen's printers are published from their extensive premises in East Harding Street. As it has already

been said, there are other less productive sources of the sacred books; and it seems a probable computation that somewhere about a century and a quarter after Voltaire's prediction the world's Bibles are multiplying at the rate of from three to four millions a year at the very least.

THE FASCINATION OF THE KING.

CHAPTER X. (*continued*).

THE jungle once done with, a long strip of open land cultivated here and there in small blocks lay before us. Then came another small strip of forest, and after that the suburbs, if I may so call them, of the city. Though I could not of course see them, I knew that our spurs were red with blood; indeed, my legs ached with the repeated blows I had been compelled of late to give my poor brute's sides. No longer did they gallop with heads erect, but they held their noses almost to the ground, thereby spoiling the pace and doubling their chances of a fall.

'It cannot be done,' cried the king, as if his soul were being torn from him. 'They are dead-beat, and another mile will be as much as they can manage.'

'Courage, my friend,' I shouted back. 'We will not say die until we're beaten. At most we have not more than five miles to do.'

'Five miles!' he cried. 'You might as well say five hundred.'

I did not answer, and in silence we continued our ride. The moon was behind a cloud, as indeed our fortunes seemed to be. But presently she emerged again, and as she did so we caught a glimpse of the citadel rock, rising dark and forlorn from out of the plain before us. The king saw it as soon as I did, and I heard him mutter hoarsely, 'Thank God! thank God!' Almost at the same instant his horse stumbled, and went down crash upon the ground, throwing its rider from the saddle as a catapult hurls a stone. I pulled up instantly, and jumping from my saddle ran to his assistance, only to discover that he was quite unconscious. Almost raving at the untowardness of our fate, I bathed his forehead and his lips with spirit, chafed his hands, and endeavoured by every means known to me to bring him back to life, but without success. He lay as he had fallen, his eyes closed, and his white haggard face turned up to the moonlight.

Well-nigh beside myself with despair, I pulled out my watch and examined the face. It was exactly a quarter past eleven. If we did not reach the castle in three-quarters of an hour, we should be too late to prevent the mutiny and to save those we loved. What on earth was to be done? I racked my brains without arriving at a conclusion.

Suddenly an idea occurred to me. Somewhat

less than a mile farther on was the house of the Chowmung, or head-man of the village, just beyond the city boundary. If I could only manage to get the king as far as that, I might leave him there in safe quarters, while I pushed on to the citadel, and took the affair of the rescue into my own hands. But how I was to get him even such a short distance I could not for the life of me see. His own horse was dead-lame, and even if he were *not*, he was hopelessly worn out, so that I might dismiss him from my mind at once. My own animal was in well-nigh as bad a condition, and even if he had been fresher, he could never have borne the weight of two such men after his journey of eighty miles. There was only one way out of the difficulty. I must leave the king where he was, and hurry on to the Chowmung's house and inform him of what had happened. He would then send for the king while I hastened on to the citadel.

No sooner had I arranged all this in my mind than I hastened to act upon it. Drawing the king's body a little off the road, I made him as comfortable as circumstances would permit, beneath a tree, and then, mounting my horse, urged him forward at his best pace towards the residence of the Chowmung in question. It was not long before I reached it, and still less time elapsed before I had the man I was in search of out in the cool night air listening to my tale. He was most concerned, and assured me that that very instant he and his son would hasten with a buffalo-cart to the place in question. Once they had found their prince I knew he would be as safe as in his own castle. Under the present circumstances perhaps safer.

As soon, therefore, as I had assured myself that he intended to do what he promised, I urged my weary horse forward again, and in less than ten minutes was toiling up the main street towards the citadel path. That once reached, I realised that it was no use my asking more of my generous beast, which now stood still, shaking like an aspen leaf. I sprang off, and taking my revolver from my holster, and placing it in my pocket, left my steed to take care of himself, and hastened up the steep path. By the time I reached the top I was more dead than alive.

Once at the gates, I paused for a moment to recover my breath, and then endeavoured to understand in what manner I should proceed next. For every reason it was necessary that I should act with the greatest caution. One fatal step might ruin everything and every one, and then God help those whom we had come in such haste to save.

Advancing to the great gate, I was about to beat upon it with my sword, when a large pebble (I have it in my possession now) fell from the battlements above, and struck me upon the helmet. I looked up instantly, to find a man leaning over the coping, making frantic signals to me. Before I could realise his

intentions, a rope descended, and fell within my reach. It was plain from this that I was to be drawn up by way of the wall, without troubling the guard at the gate. One thing, however, puzzled me, and made me feel a little anxious. Who was I supposed to be? If they thought me the messenger from the French, I should fall into the traitor's hands nicely; but on the other hand, I questioned how should I be better if I knocked at the gate, for I could not suppose that Roche would be foolish enough to allow any but his own partisans to be on duty on such an important night. So having discussed the question with myself in this fashion, I made up my mind as to what was the best thing to do, and then tied the rope securely under my arms. That done, I took a good grip upon it above my head, and having given a little jerk as a signal to begin to pull, was next moment lifted off my feet and dragged up the face of the wall.

By the time I reached the top, I had had about enough of it. My weight on the end of the long rope caused me to swing round and round like a teetotum, and once or twice I came perilously near breaking my head against the wall. However, all is well that ends well, and in a very short time I found myself being dragged over the coping by eager hands. 'Now,' thought I to myself, 'I shall discover who I am supposed to be, and then my fate will be decided for me.'

As soon as I had recovered my breath I sprang to my feet and faced the men who had pulled me up. I say the men, for the reason that there were two of them. To my joy, however, I discovered they were friends, not foes. One was the old steward of the palace, an Italian named Polacci, as faithful a fellow as ever lived, while the other was a Malay servant named A-Mat, whose devotion to the king's person was proverbial throughout the country. How it was that Roche had allowed them both to remain at large I shall never be able to understand.

'Thank Heaven, my lord, you have come,' whispered Polacci as soon as he had discovered my identity; 'but where is His Majesty? The queen expected you both.'

'Your king has met with an accident upon the road,' I answered, 'but he is safe with friends. Now let us consider what is to be done. What is the time?'

'Just twelve o'clock, my lord. The palace clock struck only a few minutes since.'

'And where is General Roche?'

'In his quarters, I believe, my lord, with the Frenchman who arrived last night.'

As if, however, to show that we must not take anything for granted, just as he spoke we heard footsteps on the stone stairs to the right of where we stood. Polacci was the first to appreciate their meaning.

'Quick, my lord,' he whispered. 'One of those footsteps is the general's. We must hide ourselves, or all is lost.'

With a strength I could scarcely have believed his meagre frame to have possessed, he dragged me in the direction of a large buttress which stood out from the wall some six or eight feet. There, in the shadow, the three of us

crouched, keeping as close to the wall as it was possible for us to do.

As Polacci had said, one of the new arrivals was Roche, the other was a man whom I then thought I had never seen before, but whom I rightly set down in my own mind as the Frenchman of whom we had been told. It was evident they were taking a last walk round the walls in order to see that everything was in readiness for their scheme. How little they guessed who was near them, only awaiting his opportunity to upset all their plans. Closer and closer they came to where we crouched, until they were only a few feet away. Fortunately they were approaching from the other side of the buttress, otherwise they could scarcely have failed to see us.

'Ah, I wish I had your confidence, friend Gaspard,' Roche's companion was saying. 'You are so certain that all will go well. But what if the men should discover that the king is not dead, and what if His Majesty should put in an appearance before you have got them out of the castle? How would you fare then?'

'It is no use considering either alternative,' said Roche confidently. 'The men will not find out their mistake until I have them safely cornered, and His Majesty, bless his royal heart, is at this moment tucked up in his blankets upwards of a hundred miles away, so I have no fear of him.'

'Ah!' said the other with a sigh of envy, 'what a man you are to be sure! If I had your powers I might do anything.'

'If I were such a craven cur as you, I should do nothing,' retorted Roche with a sneer that cut like a knife.

'There is nothing, my friend, to be gained by calling one's fellow-workers names,' said his companion.

'I am best judge of that, and you'd better leave it to me,' answered Roche. 'Now let us hasten round and see that all is right. After that we'll return to my quarters and prepare for the messenger who will be here in twenty minutes or so.'

'I am at your disposal, *cher ami*,' said the other, and they resumed their walk.

When we had given them time to get well out of hearing we crept from our hiding-place and were about to make for the steps leading down to the palace when I paused and turned to Polacci.

'Polacci,' I said, 'at any cost the king must be brought here and at once. Who can I send to fetch him?'

'If your lordship will trust me, I will go at once,' he said.

'I would rather trust you than any man, but how can you get out?'

'You must lower me over the wall,' he answered. 'Then I will hasten with all speed to the residence of the Chowmung and bring His Majesty hither.'

'Come along then, let us lower you,' I replied. 'There is no time to lose. But first give me the key so that I may get into the palace when you are gone.'

He did as I wished. The rope by which they had dragged me up was then fastened under his shoulders and made secure. That

having been done, old man as he was, he scrambled over the edge of the wall with as little fear as a boy would show in climbing for a sparrow's nest.

'Lower away gently, my lord,' he whispered; and we did as he desired.

Once he was at the bottom the rope was drawn up, and after that, with A-Mat at my heels, I made for the palace steps.

As it turned out I need not, however, have asked for the key, for when I reached the door leading into the Fountain Courtyard I found it opened and Olivia standing within, with Natalie beside her, waiting to receive me.

'Instow? Oh thank God,' she cried, and threw herself into my arms. 'But where is Marie? Why is he not with you?'

'He will be here soon,' I answered, as I shook hands with the princess; for I was resolved on no account to tell her that the king had met with an accident, at least not until I was obliged. 'Now let me come in and prepare for what is before me. No one must see me until the proper moment.'

'No one will see you,' she said. 'But you must have food first. Natalie and I have prepared everything for you. We knew you would come as soon as you received my letter by the brave Padre.'

She led me as she spoke into her own boudoir. There I found a meal spread out upon the table. I ate what I could, and taking some more with me, hurried to the king's study, which overlooked the courtyard.

Ten minutes passed, and no sign came of the messenger Roche was expecting. The clock upon the wall chimed a quarter to one and still he did not put in an appearance. I began to grow anxious. Could anything have gone wrong with him, or had he arrived while I was in Olivia's boudoir?

Just as I was beginning to reproach myself for having delayed my coming to the room where I now was, I heard a thundering at the gate, and a moment or two later a horseman galloped under the arch and into the square. Passing the palace at full speed he drew up before General Roche's door and dismounted just as the latter came rushing forth to inquire what the matter was.

Five minutes later a bugle-call rang out, and before a man could have counted a hundred the soldiers were pouring from the barracks in all stages of undress.

When they had fallen in, Roche came from his quarters, and mounting the coping of the well in the centre, proceeded to address them. He told them that a despatch had just arrived from the front in which General Du Berg stated that the army had been beaten back with terrible loss, and that the king had met his death upon the field. A deep groan burst from the ranks at this dire intelligence, which speedily changed into a roar when the governor of the citadel informed them that they were to march at once against the foe in order to avenge him. He bade them return to their quarters in order to prepare themselves for the campaign. In a quarter of an hour they would leave the citadel.

This quarter of an hour's grace was a greater

boon than I had anticipated, and I thanked God for it with all my heart and soul. By the time the bugle sounded again, I should have made my preparations, and would be ready for anything that might happen.

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER SYSTEM OF LONDON.

ITS PRACTICE AND ROMANCE.

IN the *Times* of 29th January 1891 there appeared a notice of a new undertaking which had just been started in London, and which, owing to the novelty of its operations, was creating considerable interest among Londoners. This was the 'District Messenger System,' which the *Times* described thus: 'A very useful institution, and one which bids fair to become exceedingly popular in our midst, has recently been introduced into this country from the United States, where it has for some years past been flourishing.'

In spite of the dislike of the English people to new institutions and new systems; in spite of their professed objection to American innovations; in spite of all and every obstacle, it can now fairly be said that the 'District Messenger System' is firmly rooted on the rock, and grows daily in popular favour among all classes. With its seventeen offices scattered about the various districts of London, its thousands of miles of wire, its hundreds of messengers despatched daily on thousands of different errands, its careful and elaborate organisation, it stands as a monument of what energy and perseverance will do. On the other side of the Atlantic the system has been in operation for over twenty years, and has financially been most successful, paying large dividends. It has been said that this is a service which never sleeps. When once a subscriber's house has been attached to the district office, he is at once in electrical communication with it all the day long—all the night long—all Sunday—all the year round. The system never ceases to be at the instant beck and call of the subscribers, week-day or Sunday, bank-holiday or Christmas-day; it is all the same to the cheery little Mercury, in the blue and white uniform, with the glittering badge and springy step; he hastens to learn your bidding, and perform it. It may be to deliver a couple of pheasants in the adjoining street, or to start off at once for the north of Scotland; nothing surprises him—he starts off at once on his errand.

Let us glance briefly at the system as seen at work in one of the district offices, for possibly some who read this may be unaware of the existence of the institution, London hitherto having been the only city in Europe where it has been introduced. Let us conduct our visitor to the office in Piccadilly, with which are connected some nine hundred clubs, hotels, theatres, restaurants, private houses, and shops.

This office serves as a centre for about half a mile radius. To each office is allocated a chief superintendent with two assistants. The chief superintendent is of course responsible for the whole conduct of the office and its general management. These three superintendents work in three shifts of eight hours each. To this office are further attached some eighty messengers, all neatly uniformed, and each with a distinctive number. The most rigid discipline is observed, and a system of fines is in vogue; or as may be imagined, at a rather slack time when most of the boys happened to be in, riot and confusion would ensue.

From this office are sent out a number of circuits comprising about one hundred boxes each. If any person signifies his wish to become connected with the company's office, the company's workmen proceed to tap the main wire and introduce the branch into the customer's premises. This can be done in the most unobtrusive manner either back or front, and involves no structural alterations or disturbance. The wire is then connected with a small metal box, like a small clock. On the dial of this are the words Messenger, Cab, Police, Fire, Doctor, together with a revolving pointer, and a lever. According to your requirement you move the pointer and pull the little lever, and your message speeds on its way to the office. Arriving instantaneously at the office, it signifies its arrival by making a loud clicking noise and repeatedly sounding a bell. All this disturbance conveys nothing to the mind of the general public; but to the superintendent in charge of the office it announces the number of the customer who requires the services of a messenger. He accordingly reads out the number as the message, with many a click and much sounding of bells, unfolds itself. As he gives out the number, a senior messenger, or sergeant as he is called, goes to a little nest of drawers, each drawer being numbered, and pulling out the one with the number indicated, hands it to the superintendent, who, taking from it a slip of paper with the owner's name and address printed, writes on it the hour at which the call is received. Meanwhile a messenger has risen from his seat and is standing at the counter ready, and promptly becomes, instead of a 'blue boy within,' a 'blue boy without,' as he speeds along to learn the requirements of his temporary master.

In the meantime the sergeant has booked the messenger's number, the time of his departure, and the name of his employer. Upon his return will be also booked the time he returned, the time he was away, where he was sent to, any expenses he incurred, and what his duties were. Thus a complete check is always in force and can always be referred back to if desired. Should the police signal be given, a boy is instantly despatched for the nearest policeman, whom he takes with him to the house. In the event of the fire-signal coming in, two messengers are despatched with an extingueur, while a third alarms the fire-brigade. The messengers have been the means of extinguishing several small fires before the arrival of the brigade, which might easily have

assumed much more serious dimensions. Quite recently, indeed, the newly established office in Park Street, Grosvenor Square, received two distinct fire-calls from Park Street within five minutes. In each case the fire was extinguished before the arrival of the engines which the boys had summoned.

In case of sudden illness in the dead of night, what a relief it is to be able to summon your own doctor without any one leaving the house! Otherwise there would be great delay. A servant would have to be aroused, would have to dress, and thus a precious quarter of an hour would be lost. On the 'doctor' call being given, a boy goes straight for him, brings him to the house and waits in case he has to go for medicine or any other purpose. On the night of Sir Edward Hamley's death the 'doctor' call was given, and within ten minutes of the call being received, the messenger was back in the office, having conducted the doctor to the patient's bedside; but alas! it was too late, the distinguished soldier had breathed his last.

There is one other very important function which the company performs. At large institutions it is usual to have a watchman by night; but who knows whether the watchman goes his rounds honestly and conscientiously every night? If he does not, it is clear that the building and its contents would be just as safe without him. Or again, it is possible for the best and most faithful of watchmen to be overpowered by drowsiness, or illness, or robbers. The difficulty is, then, to watch the watchman! This the company undertakes to do in the following simple manner. Call-boxes are placed in various parts of the building, say, four of them. Every hour or half-hour a watchman goes the round and signifies to the office that all is well at each point. Should the call not come in at the appointed hour, a messenger is despatched to see what is the matter. Or should the watchman find anything wrong, he can summon aid by switching on the police or fire signal. Where this service has been introduced, it has been the habit to send in to the owner in the morning a paper in which is recorded the exact time at which the watchman went his rounds.

Having thus treated of the practice of the District Messenger Company, let us glance at its more amusing and even romantic side.

To narrate all the different uses to which messengers are put would be a very long and tedious task, but some are I think sufficiently peculiar to be of interest. Upon one occasion a man presented himself at one of the offices with a smart young lady of some seventeen summers. 'Can you help me out of a difficulty,' said he to the superintendent. 'I have to go shopping, and I can't take my daughter all over the place with me, nor have I time to take her back myself. Can you let me have a trustworthy youth to take her back to her school at Highgate?' 'Certainly, sir!' said the superintendent; and after thinking a moment, called out 'No. 352.' No. 352 came forward looking rather shy and uncomfortable, and developing a little extra colour as he did so. But the end of it was that No. 352 and the young lady got on the top of a bus, and

were seen to start off for Highgate chatting away most amicably together.

At the same office a few days later a gentleman presented himself with three small children. He also wanted to get rid of his encumbrances while he went shopping. The children had a decided penchant for Olympia, but he could not take them. The result was that a trustworthy youth was despatched with the children, and they, messenger and all, did 'Venice in London' thoroughly, and enjoyed themselves hugely, untrammelled as they were by any parental restraint.

One day the Charing Cross office was honoured by the presence of royalty. Quietly and unpretentiously there came in His Majesty the King of the Keeling Islands. I am informed after exhaustive inquiry that His Majesty's dominions comprise several coral atolls, far out in the Indian Ocean and midway between Calcutta and Melbourne. Being on a friendly visit to his sister sovereign, Queen Victoria, he naturally inspected the District Messenger System, no doubt with a view to introducing it in his own country. So gratified was His Majesty at what he saw, that he was graciously pleased to issue his royal commands that a messenger should go into the City of London and purchase thirty shillings' worth of penny and twopenny toys for distribution among his subjects on his return to the Keeling Islands. His instructions were faithfully carried out, a messenger being occupied for two days in the streets and toyshops making a careful selection.

Long-distance journeys are constantly taken at the shortest notice. On one occasion one of our most eminent statesmen sent a boy up to the north of Scotland with some important papers. Upon another, one of the most trustworthy lads in the service was despatched to Brighton with a large sum of money in notes. Journeys have on several occasions been taken to Manchester and Liverpool, and to Sheffield, Clitheroe, Grantham, Leicester, Chester, Winchester, Southampton, Eastbourne, and Birmingham, and even to Antwerp. Some of their daily duties are as follows: Taking a blind gentleman out walking, taking dogs out, acting as footmen on cabs, &c., taking children to school, conveying luncheon to races, waiting at table, general domestic service, shopping at the stores, meeting people at railway stations, leaving cards, and in short for every conceivable purpose, including that of fielding lawn-tennis balls, for which purpose H.R.H. the Duke of Saxe-Coburg has employed them.

At the Victoria Street office one evening an officer in the Guards came hurriedly in inquiring whether he could have a boy to go down to Pirbright with a pony, and to act as a groom for a month. A suitable lad was found, immediately went off, and gave great satisfaction.

One of those ladies who haunt the Law Courts also invariably employs a lad from the Chancery Lane office. He has to act generally as her aide-de-camp. He follows her about the courts all day, carries her bag, and takes notes for her in court.

One instance must be given of the care with

which the call-boxes must be treated, or disastrous results may ensue. In the early days of the company's operations a certain M.P. was very desirous of having a call-box installed in his house. Accordingly the wireman came one morning and set to work. The member of that august assembly was very anxious to have it installed that day if possible, as he was entertaining some friends to dinner and was very desirous of showing it to them. The foreman promised to do what he could. He said that anyhow he would fit up the call-box, but he was afraid it would scarcely be possible to attach it to the office that day. Accordingly after dinner, when the harassed legislator and his friends were all on excellent terms with themselves, they were conducted by their host to see this scientific novelty in the hall. He, carefully explaining to them first that it was because it was unconnected that he could show them the working of all the signals, proceeded to turn the pointer on to 'Messenger,' and then pulled the small lever. A clock-work buzzing resulted. 'There!' said the triumphant member, 'that would bring me a messenger in five minutes, if it was connected, and now see, "Cab."' The same operation was repeated with the 'Police' and 'Fire' signals to the delight of the audience, who were really interested. 'Most ingenious contrivance,' said one. 'Lucky it's not connected,' said another. The words were scarcely out of his mouth before there was a thundering knock at the front door and a loud peal at the bell. Before the door was opened a loud clattering was heard outside, and the genial features of the host began to wear an anxious look. This considerably increased when the door was opened and disclosed two messengers and a hansom. But this was only the first instalment. Another minute, and the hurried pattering of footsteps was heard as two more boys arrived breathless with the extincuteur, and were immediately followed by a policeman. And then last, but anything but least, arrived the fire-engine, throbbing and smoking as it galloped up to the door. Needless to say, all the guests were delighted at this unexpected practical proof of the efficiency of the new invention, and were profuse in their thanks to their host, whom they left in a very limp condition, after his efforts to explain matters in succession to the messengers, cabmen, police, and firemen, who all seemed to be rather sore about it.

Quite recently a departure, in several respects entirely new, has been made by the company. In America it has long been the practice of the Messenger Companies to take orders for fuel. The London Company now does the same, and has also undertaken agencies for Pickford & Company, for Pitt & Scott the continental carriers, and for several other institutions. Two of these are of sufficient importance to the general public to deserve a separate mention.

If you require one of the Coupé Company's neat carriages, you can now obtain one almost immediately by means of a District Messenger boy. It is not only infinitely easier, and in every way a more satisfactory way of transmitting a Coupé order, but it has the additional

merit of costing nothing. The other great feature to which allusion has been made is the agency for the sale of theatre tickets. There surely never was any institution better adapted for this purpose than the Messenger Company, with its numerous branches, its extensive telephone system, and its large number of subscribers.

There is one other feature the directors contemplate shortly introducing with the idea of doing away with the nuisance of the irrepressible cab runner. It has often been suggested that a luggage porter at each office would be a great addition to the district. A trustworthy man would then be always secured by the timorous householder, instead of the wild, uncouth roughs that accompany your luggage into your front hall, demanding as a right that they should carry it.

Looking at the Messenger Service from the purely philanthropic point of view, undoubtedly a very good work is done. Boys are taken on just when they are leaving school and at once brought under the healthy influence of a firm but kindly discipline. They are taught to be clean and smart, punctual and accurate, to be well-mannered, and above all learn the invaluable lesson of implicit obedience. By remaining three or four years in the company's service, their employers acquire a perfect knowledge of their character, and so are able to give them a thoroughly good recommendation on leaving to better themselves. Indeed messengers have exceptional opportunities of getting into good positions, and the experience they gain of all the ways of the world during their term of service as messengers will surely not be lost upon them. In one way the system is very difficult to work smoothly. Of course the interests of the company require that an ample staff of messengers should be maintained in order that a prompt and reliable service should be afforded. But at the same time it is evident that the size of the staff must not exceed the demand for its services. Now after looking into things most closely from every point of view, and after comparing one year with another, and one event with another, it seems quite impossible to tell beforehand when a day is likely to be a busy one. As a rule, a very windy wet day is a very busy one; but not invariably. Sometimes a race meeting near London will cause a rush on the company's resources, but not always. Sometimes an office will suddenly become very busy in the mornings for a week together. Steps will at once be taken to meet the unusual demand, when all at once that office will become very slack for a week or so. Then without any warning it will get very busy in the evenings, and subside again as suddenly. The vagaries of the public in this respect are very curious and puzzling. It very much resembles the unceasing activity of the sea, constantly rising and falling in its anxious restlessness. One moment the ocean is smooth as glass, without a ripple on its unruffled bosom; in another, the tempestuous waters are tossing angrily their white-crested manes. So it is with the Messenger Service. Twenty minutes may pass and not a soul require a messenger, even in that busy and wealthy district of Piccadilly. Then all of a

moment the office leaps into sudden activity. It has occurred to a dozen or so of different persons that they want something done. So they flash their signals into the office, it may be at the rate of two or three a minute. In half an hour those messengers will be scattered all over London and possibly the suburbs too. Their knowledge of local geography must be something portentous. The company shows a thoroughly up-to-date appreciation of the requirements of the public, especially in their latest new feature of providing luggage porters, strong, respectable men, the pick of old soldiers, sailors, and police.

THE HEDGLEY-HASKINS LAWSUIT.

CHAPTER III.

SUNDAY was literally a day of rest in Plunkett Settlement, if we except one sceptical person who would persist in mending fences or doing other such things on that day, and who was unanimously regarded as a much misguided man, who would one day see the error of his ways to his own intense if not everlasting regret. It was a day of rest from toil. No shriek of distant train or roar of traffic woke the echoes of the Sabbath hills. The streams murmured, the birds sang, the leaves made music when the wind swept them; but the sound of Nature's voices only emphasised the general silence. A great deal of visiting was done on that day; so much, indeed, that one clergyman had levelled more than one vigorous sermon against it as an insidious and dangerous enemy of the human soul. The enemy, however, had not been routed.

There was the usual amount of visiting on the Sunday succeeding the events already narrated, and much speculation was indulged in regarding the effect of the Hedgley-Haskins embroglio upon the relations between the plaintiff's pretty daughter, May Hedgley, and the defendant's son, Ben Haskins; for one local authority of high repute in such matters had openly expressed the conviction that Ben was 'just half cracked about May—so he was.'

The settlement was favoured with a preaching service in the meeting-house every Sunday night. It was a 'union' meeting-house, for some of the people were Methodists and some were Baptists, and in view of the limited exchequer of the settlement they had joined their forces in the erection of a place of worship. On alternate Sundays the preachers of the two denominations conducted service, both to the same audience, for everybody attended every meeting. It was too great an event in the programme of life in the settlement to be ignored, even by the sceptical person already referred to who frequently occupied a seat on the rear benches, and thus, in the general opinion, forfeited all excuse for his continued contumacy.

The service was unusually well attended on the evening under consideration. It was a fine sight to see Mr Haskins rise in his place, for there was

no organ, and 'set' the hymn-tunes; and, a little later, to see Mr Hedgley pass the contribution-box down one side of the house, not omitting even to poke it under the nose of Mr Haskins, and graciously receive that gentleman's thankoffering. The preacher acquitted himself with ability and vigour, in pressing home to the hearts of his hearers the blessedness of unity among the brethren, and altogether the service was of an eminently gratifying character. If now and then eyes wandered to the demure face and figure of sweet May Hedgley, sitting well up to the front with some other girls, and then wandered back to the stalwart form of Ben Haskins, the scrutiny was not rewarded by any startling discovery; for innocence in the one case and studied carelessness in the other was the prevailing expression. When the service had concluded, there was a general round of hand-shaking and sympathetically mutual inquiries concerning health, followed by a very gradual melting away in the autumn moonlight. Mr Hedgley and Mr Haskins wore high serenity on their brows, but it was noticed they did not shake hands.

May Haskins and a girl companion went out together, and set off down the road. The companion, however, speedily, and it is fair to say, not at all reluctantly, found herself leaning on the arm of a young man. May, therefore, fell back and walked alone. Not long, however. A strong footstep crunched the gravel behind her, and the shadow of a sturdy form loomed up in the moonlight beside her own.

'Good-evening.'

'Good-evening.'

A pause, during which the two shadows progressed evenly along the road.

'Fine night.'

'I think it's beautiful.'

'Good meetin' to-night.'

'Yes, it was—splendid, I thought. Great many there to-night.'

'There was so—quite a crowd.'

The most readily available topics being thus exhausted, silence ensued for a little time.

'You're very quiet to-night, May.' This at least confidentially.

'Am I?' also confidentially.

'You are so.'

'I think you are, too.'

'Well, I don't want to be.'

But silence fell once more, despite this frank avowal, for Ben was smitten with a bashfulness altogether out of harmony with his appearance, and his companion was not a whit more confident. But there had to be a break sooner or later.

'Will you take my arm?'

It was a bold question, Ben thought, but he was rewarded by feeling at once within his arm the faint pressure of a shy little hand. The atmosphere was clearer at once, and though they walked some distance farther in perfect silence, it was by no means oppressive.

The reader should understand that these two interesting young persons had not been in the habit of taking moonlit walks together. They had been schoolmates in childhood and friends since, and had met innumerable times, as was inevitable in so circumscribed a field of action as Plunkett Settlement afforded to the young and lively members of the community. But the

shadow of the Hedgley-Haskins land dispute had hovered always in their vicinity with a greater or less density, and the two families were never quite sure when another eruption might occur. Therefore, the amount of mutual visiting indulged in by the members of the two families had not been such as to cause a suspicion that they lived for each other. Ben Haskins could count on his fingers the number of times he had visited the Hedgley farmhouse within the last five years. But he had had ample opportunity to cultivate the acquaintance of May Hedgley, as far as mutual reserve would permit, and of late had even hailed the advent of such opportunities. The maiden could not well be oblivious of the fact, and that she did not repel the timorous advances might be construed as evidence of a mutual feeling. But she might have been actuated by motives quite the opposite, and Ben knew enough of woman's nature in the abstract to understand that it is not always prudent to trust appearances. On this particular Sunday evening he was more than ordinarily dubious as to the state of mind of his companion.

'I wasn't quite sure,' he said to her at length, 'whether you'd speak to me to-night or not.'

'Why?'

'Oh, the old folks have had such a row, and people's had so much to say, that I thought maybe you'd rather I'd stay away.'

'It isn't your fault is it, Ben, that father and your father's goin' to law?'

May said in answer. 'No, it is not. I tried to reason with our old man, but it's no use.'

'I don't blame you, Ben,' the girl said; and then went on with a little weary sigh, 'it's too bad. We've been neighbours all our lives—and now to think there's gon to be a lawsuit. I had a good cry over it.'

Ben gave a sudden pressure to the hand within his arm, and echoed her words with unmistakable feeling: 'It is too bad.'

They had been walking very slowly, and many of the people going that way had passed them by, staring eagerly at the two to be sure of their identity, and so have a fruitful source of spicy comment to mingle with general criticism of the meeting. Ben returned the stare in every case with resentful interest, well knowing the motive by which it was prompted. They had now reached what was called the 'cross roads,' from which one road deviated and led away from the settlement. But a short distance along it a bridge spanned the narrow, elm-bordered stream that watered the valley. By tacit consent they turned aside and walked to the bridge.

'Shall we stop here?' Ben asked, when they had reached the middle of the bridge.

She turned with him, and they leaned together over the rail to look down upon the water, dark in the shadow, but showing a track of gleaming silver where the moonbeams fell, and sparkling scintillations where the stars embosomed themselves on the smooth surface. The evening was rarely beautiful. A faint breeze stirred the leafy elms to music, that joined in soothing and delightful harmony the murmurs of the stream. The autumn landscape, bathed in moonlit softness, was a dream of tender loveliness, every harsh outline melting into beauty in the subduing light.

'Isn't it beautiful?'

The girl spoke the words with a little sigh of rapture as her gaze dwelt upon the scene before them. Perhaps they were uncultivated, these two. May Hedgley had not been more than fifty miles from home during her nineteen years of life. Her companion had gone to the market of the nearest city on several occasions, and had seen something of life in the adjoining settlements; but neither of them had spent many years at school, and both were most familiar with the daily round of farmer life. Such intellectual culture as they had came from membership in a temperance society—for a number of these had risen, flourished, and passed away in Plunkett Settlement in the last ten years—and from the reading of the weekly paper, and a few books they had enjoyed; but, measured by critical standards, this would not entitle them to much distinction. Yet even the uncultivated eye and heart at the romantic age have some intuitive conception and appreciation of that beauty around us which those feel who are most cultured, but of which even the most cultured find it difficult to give an abstract definition. So these two felt the indefinable 'spell of the place and the hour,' and though Ben's answer, 'It's a glorious night,' to her fervent ejaculation was commonplace enough, there was behind the expression a depth of earnest feeling. An added charm was given to the effect of certain unexpressed, and perhaps only partially defined, longings in the heart of each. They stood for a little in silence that was as natural as the previous exclamations had been.

Presently Ben spoke.

'I'm glad, May, that the row between the old folks hasn't made hard feelin's between you and me.'

'So am I,' she answered, in a low tone.

'Did you notice how people looked at us to-night?' he asked.

'Oh yes; I expected that.'

'And did you care?'

'No. Why should I? It's none of their business.'

'They make it their business,' said Ben, with a tinge of bitterness.

'They must talk about somebody,' May rejoined. 'While they're at us they're givin' somebody else a rest.'

She was looking down at the moon's reflection in the stream, her face turned a little from him. Ben looked at her, and as he looked a deep longing filled the heart of the great, awkward fellow, and a sudden resolution nerved him to speak his thought. It came to him with sudden and overwhelming force that in all the world there was nothing else so dear to him as this girl who was willing to brave the sting of gossip tongues and walk at his side, even though the shadow of a quarrel hovered over their homes. He spoke her name so sharply that she started and looked up in wonder.

'May,' he said, his deep voice a little unsteady, 'I have something I want to say to you. I hardly know how to speak to you—but I must speak to-night.'

He paused, and the girl looked up at him, wondering still.

'I know I'm only a rough chap,' he went on. 'I can't brag about my good looks or good manners.'

'Did I ever find fault with your looks or your manners, Ben?'

'No, you're too good-hearted to do that. That's why I took to you more than to other girls. You never hurt a fellow's feelin's. I liked you more the better we got acquainted—that is, since we both grewed up—and now I care so much for you that I've got to see you more, or not at all. Do you understand me, May?'

It was not very dramatic, and Ben felt far from heroic; but his meaning was clear enough. His companion's wondering look had changed and her eyes fell, but she answered in a low tone:

'Yes—I understand.'

'You are not offended?' he anxiously asked her.

She looked up, a happy light shining in her dusky eyes, and met his gaze fearlessly.

'No, Ben; how could I be?'

He was answered. Without another word he leaned forward and took her in his arms. Had any of the worthy people of Plunkett Settlement witnessed that proceeding, there would have been a great deal more spice in the gossip of the period.

'I was afraid,' Ben said at length, 'that you didn't care for me very much. I wish I could tell you how happy I am.'

'Not happier than I am, Ben.'

In lieu of further remark he lowered his head and kissed her over and over again.

Lovers, as a rule, do not care to have their first mutual confidences reported at length. It is enough to observe just here that a novel and striking complication in connection with the Hedgley-Haskins embroglio had its origin on this particular Sunday evening.

CONCERNING VAMPIRES.

RATHER more than one hundred and fifty years ago there dwelt at Gandersheim, a small town in the Duchy of Brunswick, one Johann Christoph Harenberg, a pious and deeply-learned German pastor, Rector of the Foundation School at the town just named, whose heart was vexed, and his conscience grieved, at the prevalence of superstition among his people. Superstition of any kind was abhorrent to the pastor, who saw even in the ordinary tales of gnomes and fairies, such as are told around the Christmas hearth, things repugnant to God and perilous to the soul. But it was not against these idle fables that the effort of his life was directed. He chose a darker superstition, and smote Satan in a more vital place. He would not spend his strength in arguing against the follies of children while there spread and flourished among his people a belief which menaced perpetually the safety of human life, and after life enchain the soul to a course of evil deeds here on the earth; and therefore, girding himself for a great intellectual effort, Harenberg boldly attacked the prevalent belief in vampires.

In Britain the vampire superstition seems never to have been prevalent—though the burial of suicides at cross-roads with a stake thrust

through them, usual in England till well into this century, closely resembles the precaution used in Slavonic lands for inducing vampires to cease from troubling; accordingly to a native of these islands it may appear that in bringing all his ponderous engines of learning to bear on such a subject, his profound knowledge of Greek and Latin literature, his familiarity with Hebrew, and his exhaustive acquaintance with the theological treatises of all Europe, the good pastor was tilting against a windmill, attacking an illusion which might very well have been let alone. Indeed, there are probably many people to be found who, so far from comprehending the reality of the mischief which Harenberg saw at work among his flock, do not even understand its nature, and are acquainted with no vampires, save those large bats which have a reputation in South America for biting the toes of unwary persons who lie uncovered in their beds. There must always be a certain interest in the false beliefs which have possessed the minds of men; and before beginning to speak of Harenberg's book, which is now somewhat rare, it may be explained that a vampire was a person, man or woman, who, after death, or after that which seemed to be death, returned to the scene of his or her past life, and sucked the blood of living people. This was bad enough; but the worst part of the matter was, that innocent people slain in this way became vampires themselves, and so the evil spread in an ever-widening circle.

Such was the belief which Harenberg set himself to combat; being instigated thereto, not only by the pious nature of the work, but also, as he himself explained, by the wishes of 'an exalted person,' to whom he dedicates his book, in terms of mingled worldly respect and spiritual blessing, which make us feel as if we knew and loved the man. Thus fortified with the protection of the great, which he doubtless considered indispensable to him, and which, perhaps, was so indeed, Harenberg began to accumulate materials for his task.

His first proceeding seems to have been to stock his paragonage with every work he could find which touched, directly or indirectly, on vampires. To these he added an extraordinary number of treatises on necromancy, witchcraft, and the cabalistic art. He provided himself with Reuchlin's *De Arte Cabalistica* and the *Dialogus de Operationibus Dæmonum* of Michael Psellus. Meyenberg, *On the Depths of Satan*, stood on his shelves, side by side with the Dissertation of Theodore Kirchmeier *On Men apparently Dead*; while the great and learned composition of Gottlieb Wernsdorf *Concerning the Condition of Souls parted from the Flesh, and their Dealings with the Living*, naturally occupied a place of honour. Hoffman's work on *The Power of the Devil over Human Bodies* was, of course, indispensable; while on the collection of tales formed by Harsdorfer under the attractive title, *Mournful Tales of Murder*, the pastor relied for many precious facts. These, with Paracelsus, and a host more names of greater or of less repute among those whose thoughts dwell in darkness, adorned the pastor's study; and there the good man sat day after day—for the work must have occupied many months, if not even years—plunged in the constant

contemplation of the most gruesome and terrific amongst the imaginings of man.

If ever ghosts or wandering spirits revisited the glimpses of the moon, one might suppose that the rectory at Gandersheim was full of them. The little study, where sat the patient student, straining, with all his intense German application, and his eager longing to know, after a clear view of the truth or falsity of the evil influences said to proceed from the next world, might surely have been a meeting-place of spirits. Doubtless, the peasants, returning late at night to Gandersheim, trembled and hurried on when they saw across the fields the light gleaming from the window where their pastor sat wrestling with Satan. One cannot doubt that Harenberg himself had his moments of terror and of shaken faith, as he read and pondered the wild and terrible stories which he either relates or refers to in his pages; but of such waverings of spirit there is no trace whatever in his work. One clear thread runs through it all; a firm and steady faith in the universal rule of goodness and of reason shines out of every paragraph. Truth it is which the pastor seeks, and not once does he bow the knee to superstition.

But now let us see what these tales were which so disturbed the excellent man and impelled him to deal this lusty blow at Satan. From the borders of Turkey they chiefly emanated. Servia is particularly named as a hotbed of such beliefs, numbers of which were vouched for on excellent authority. The following story, for example, is told by Erasmus Franciscus, who annotated Valvasor's standard work, describing the Archduchy of Krain or Carniola—the reference is to the third volume, book eleven, of that valuable treatise.

In the year 1672 there dwelt in the market-town of Kring, in the said Archduchy, one George Grando, who, in the ordinary course of nature, fell sick, died, and was buried with the usual rites of the Christian church. These rites were solemnised by one Father George, a monk of St Paul; but so little did they avail to give rest to Grando's spirit, that the monk, with the other mourners, had hardly returned to the widow's house, intending to give her consolation, when they saw Grando himself sitting behind the door. It was clearly futile to console anybody for the loss of one who was not gone after all; and arguing thus, all the mourners tumbled over each other out of the house, leaving husband and wife to settle the matter together. Even the monk fled as quickly as the rest.

As it proved in the event, he would have done better to remain and grapple with the difficulty at the outset. For, ere long, strange stories began to fly round Kring, of a dark figure seen to go about the streets by night, stopping now and then to tap at the door of some house, but always passing on without waiting for an answer. In a little while people began to die mysteriously in Kring; and it was noticed that the deaths occurred in the houses at which the spectral figure had tapped its signal. Some said the spectre was that of Grando; and, at the same time, the widow complained that she was tormented by the spirit

of her husband, who night after night threw her into a deep sleep, doubtless with the wicked object of sucking blood, as all vampires did, while she lay in slumber. All these tales and rumours gathered force so quickly that, at the end of a fortnight, the 'supan,' or chief-magistrate of Kring, could no longer disregard them, but felt himself under the necessity of taking the usual steps to ascertain whether it was indeed the case that Grando was a vampire.

It was a nervous business, but the supan summoned those whom he thought the most stout-hearted of his neighbours; and, having fortified them in advance with a judicious allowance of strong cordial, laid the matter open to them. Grando, he said, had already been gnawing several people in Kring, and it was high time to stop his antics. The brave fellows professed loudly that they were not afraid of 'the restless night-walker,' and they sallied off, provided with two torches and a crucifix.

Perhaps it was a little foolhardy to undertake this task at night; for the wavering light of torches has ere now upset the nerves of many men who are brave enough in the cheerful sunlight. We need not, therefore, be unduly contemptuous of these stout ghost-catchers of Kring when we find it recorded that, on opening the grave, and seeing Grando's body untouched by decay, the mouth open with a pleasant smile, and a rosy flush upon its cheeks, the whole party were seized with terror, and fled in ignominious rout back to Kring. This cowardly retreat of nine living men, before one who was not even certainly dead, annoyed the supan, who had remained behind, occupied, doubtless, with more important affairs. He rated them soundly, and tried to restore their courage with more cordial; but to no effect. Not a man would budge unless he would go back with them to the grave. Even a vampire must certainly respect the supan the men argued; but the supan himself was not quite sure, and thought it prudent to have a priest in the party. A priest was accordingly brought—not the Father George who had already been concerned in this affair, but one of tougher fibre—and the party carried with them also a heavy stake of hawthorn wood, sharpened to a point, which was generally esteemed a sovereign specific in the case of vampires.

At the grave all was as the fugitives had left it. Grando lay smiling on them, with the high flush on his cheeks, like a man just awaking from a refreshing slumber; but there was one of the party now who did not fear him. The priest knelt down solemnly, and held his crucifix aloft. 'Oh, vampire, look on this!' he said. 'Here is Christ Jesus who loosed us from the pains of hell, and died for us upon the tree!' And he went on to conjure the restless spirit in the most compassionate and moving terms, on which a wonderful thing happened. Great tears formed under the vampire's eyelids, and rolled slowly down his cheeks—a sign of human weakness, which gave courage to those standing by. The hawthorn stake was brought forward; but, as often as they strove to drive it through the body, the sharpened

wood rebounded; and it was not until one, bolder than the rest, sprang into the grave and cut off the vampire's head, that the evil spirit departed, with a loud shriek and a contortion of the limbs, which proved too well what it was that had found a dwelling-place in the dust and ashes which were once a man.

Such was a typical vampire story, differing in no material point from fifty others which were perpetually circulating from the borders of Hungary to the Baltic. One may imagine how the ignorant peasant folk terrified themselves with these tales, passing them from mouth to mouth with added touches, which heightened their effect, until, on infirm minds, a sensation was produced which the pastor, the natural counsellor of his flock, might well have thought worth his utmost efforts to allay.

With quaint and curious learning Harenberg traces the development of the vampire superstition from the heathen sacrifices of living animals, offered to satisfy the thirst of invisible spirits for blood, through the fancies of the Platonists, and the dreams of the learned Jew, Isaac Abarbanel, who maintained that, before the soul can be loosed from the fetters of its flesh, it must lie some months with it in the grave, down to the doctrine, adopted rather than imagined, of the Greek Church, which taught that persons who died under its ban could not be resolved into the elements again until the curse was taken off, but lay untouched by decay, while their spirits wandered up and down the earth, tapping at house doors as Grando did, with the same fatal consequences. To serve its own ends, the church scattered this doctrine to the winds, which spread it like thistledown, laying up countless difficulties for teachers of a higher morality in the future. But even greater than the responsibility of the monks, Harenberg declares, is that of the so-called men of science, Thales, Saracenus, Boehmen, and many another, who, being cursed with intellectual laziness, introduced a spirit whenever they encountered a difficulty. 'Not, however, that I wish to deny,' he remarks, 'that the lore of spirits, when better cultivated, may give right valuable help to a Christian man; but many things are to be done before that can happen. Safe experiences, sound conclusions, and a well-grounded consideration of the most difficult places in the book of God—these are the elements, and all the "wind-mill spirits" and soft-blowing airs of fancy must first be swept away.'

'Safe experiences, sound conclusions'—wise and weighty words, good pastor! But when shall the world behold a controversialist who, while exposing the weakness of his adversary's buttresses, casts an equally careful eye upon his own?

'Let us grant,' cries Harenberg, 'that the flush of life was really on Grando's body many days after his death and burial. Still, there would be no miracle in that if the man were alive all the time! Look at the *Chronica Slavica*—by an unknown author, it is true, but not on that account to be distrusted—where you will find that a school-boy of Lübeck, in the year 1367, slept for seven years at a stretch, after which he woke up perfectly well!' If this fact be thought too venerable to use in an argument,

take the Swedish gardener—no authority is quoted for this story—who, going to pull a neighbour out of the water, tumbled in himself. The water was ice cold, and the gardener lay in it for sixteen hours, at the end of which time he was taken out stiff and to all appearance dead; but, being carefully toasted before a gentle fire, with abundance of blankets, came round quite nicely, and may be living still. And, as we cannot all expect to have the constitution of a Swedish gardener, listen again to the wonderful story of a woman who, travelling somewhere with her baby, a child seven weeks old, fell into a pond, and lay under water for no less than three days! You will say both mother and child must have been dead! But no! judicious treatment brought them both round, and they were none the worse; though both these stories, Harenberg admits, have caused great searchings of heart among the learned. Moreover, it is well known that swallows sleep all the winter through, and guard themselves from being waked up too soon, either by burrowing down under the earth or by sinking themselves deep in streams or lakes, where nobody can disturb them.

With such a hail of indubitable facts, the learned Harenberg bombards us into admitting that animation may sometimes be suspended; and that, if the supan of Kring had laid aside his hawthorn stake, his knife, his crucifix, and resorted to the gentler method of chafing Grando's extremities, and toasting him before a comfortable fire, much more satisfactory results might have been obtained. Hereby, of course, a hole is knocked in the vampire superstition, which, if not as deep as a well, or as wide as a church door, is, in Harenberg's opinion, quite enough to let its life out. But, as the pastor was nothing if not an honest controversialist, he has no sooner achieved this signal success than he gathers up his forces to complete it by demolishing the stories of the living people, who claimed to have seen the vampire, or to have been bitten by him.

It would be very tedious to follow the pastor through all the interminable branches of his argument. For, though starting majestically like a river at the flood, it must be admitted that its current soon gets choked among sandbanks of learning, and meanders on through dismal wastes, where one stumbles perpetually over authorities quoted from the most recondite sources. Diodorus Siculus, Sextus Empiricus, Censorinus, Julius Cesar Bengerus, Thomas Stanleius (one is refreshed to find an English albeit Latinised name), Mauratinus, Conrad Dippel, Epiphanius, Iamblichus—one should be a German pastor to enjoy them. But at the end of all this cavernous reasoning a gleam of light emerges. These tales of such people who believe that vampires have been plaguing them, what are they then? 'Mere illusions!' shouts the pastor triumphantly. 'Nothing in the world but the workings of a diseased imagination.' Really, one is so pleased with the conclusion that one forgets to ask whether the good man might not have reached it by an easier road.

Having thus established himself securely on the hill of wisdom, Harenberg proceeds, in a

few concluding chapters, to cast a pitying glance round upon the follies of his neighbours, touching lightly upon witches, Brocken-spectres, werewolves, and other grisly superstitions which were widely held among the people. Witches, he declares, are much to be pitied, there being excellent reason to suppose that all their stories of having sailed up to the Brocken on a broomstick, with a large cat perched in front, and of having done various outrageous and wicked things there, are just dreams mistaken for reality. 'Proof!' chirps the pastor; 'there is excellent proof.' Some years ago a young witch in Mecklenburg gave herself up to the authorities, being quite unable to bear any longer the recollection of the awful crimes she had committed on the Brocken, and driven by an irresistible impulse to confess them. Luckily for her, the authorities were sensible men; and, instead of setting up a stake at once and scattering her ashes to the four winds of heaven, they were minded to watch her, and see whether she really went to the Brocken. Accordingly, they locked her up, with all the charms and unguents which she declared to be necessary, and had the satisfaction of seeing that, after she had smeared her temples and the soles of her feet with an ointment of opium, she did nothing more desperately wicked than to fall into a heavy sleep. This was no hanging matter in Mecklenburg, even though the foolish woman woke up in the firm belief that she had sailed through the skies as before. The prosaic magistrates believed their eyes, and let her go.

Again, the same method is good towards werewolves, those terrific beings, human creatures with wolves' form and temper, who, by their mingled nature, create far more terror than the fiercest wolf or the most savage man. 'What shall I say of werewolves?' asks the pastor, evidently at a loss for a moment. But he quickly recollects how certain peasants once caught one, and brought him before Duke Albert of Prussia. The accusation of being a werewolf was supported by the fellow himself, who admitted that twice every year, at Christmas and at midsummer, he was turned into a wolf, and possessed with a lust for tearing men and animals to pieces. 'Shut him up over Christmas,' said the duke, 'and let us see this werewolf change.' But when Christmas had come and gone, the man was a man still, though possessed by a mania which made him fancy himself a wolf.

Strange what the fancy will do! Harenberg muses. There was a man in Harzburg, a capital fellow, a good Christian soul, but possessed with the notion that on Ascension Day anybody who tried could ascend to heaven. He tried it once himself, mounted up into a cherry-tree, spread out his arms boldly, as if they had been wings, and leaped into the air. Alas! he went down instead of up, bruising himself sorely upon the ground.

With such pleasing anecdotes, the pastor adorns his moral, and, at the same time, drives it home. But, perhaps, enough has been detailed of these reasonable and Christian reflections, as their author styled them; for it is unfortunately true that they would be more amusing if they were less reasonable. The world—it is a de-

plorable fact—does not love reason; it loves lies. Had Harenberg been a liar, he might have been a more popular and more widely-read author. He was too conscientious; and one may doubt whether his contemporaries were at all pleased with him for stripping so many of their favourite illusions of every rag of decent covering. Perhaps these considerations may serve to deter any pastor of our own days who may be impelled to slaughter some superstition—if any there be in this dull age—to refrain from being so very truthful and rational in his argument, and to try to pick up, as he goes along, some of that ‘atmosphere’ which is the only thing that can make a book attractive to the general reader.

HOW THE KROOMEN TOOK THE GUNBOAT.

By the Author of *Rising of the Brass Men*.

BETWEEN the British colonies of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast in West Africa lies a region of palm and cottonwood forest and muddy river, stretching away from the shores of the blue Atlantic towards the little-known Soudan; where, along some five or six hundred miles of surf-fringed beach, the woolly-haired Kroomen dwelt for centuries in comparative peace.

Now, as a rule, the West African native will do little manual work; he fishes, hunts, and is proficient at any kind of ‘trade,’ and should these fail him, the fertility of the soil is such, that a minimum of labour expended in planting bananas, maize, or cassava will provide sufficient food.

The Kroo country, however, is a hard one, where food is scarce; so the inhabitants have frequently to go forth in search of sustenance, and on three thousand miles of coast from the Senegal to the Congo, wherever there are steamers to load or oil-casks to roll down, the easy-going, laughing Krooboy is to be found.

It happened that about seventy years ago various philanthropists and others in the United States sent back a number of freed and partly educated slaves to form a colony in the Kroo country, which they did, and in due time the colony developed into a republic (Liberia). Then the latter proceeded to make laws, which it required the Kroomen to comply with, and erected custom-houses, and levied heavy duties on their trade. The Kroomen, however, accustomed from time immemorial to do what seemed right in their own eyes, and to trade when and where they pleased, objected strongly to pay so much on every case of gin or ‘piece of cloth’ they brought in, or so many dollars a head each time they sailed away in search of work. So, after a desultory skirmish from time to time, and the burning of a custom-house or two, they finally decided to disregard the Republic altogether.

Accordingly, up to the present day, they board the steamers by night from lonely beaches

swept by the heavy Atlantic surf and import their ‘trade’ duty free, without the aid of the customs. Also, when food is scarce, they steal out in their two-feet-wide canoes to intercept the vessels by river mouths, hidden amid the desolate mangrove swamps, or occasionally even swim off in scores, so as to get away in search of work ‘down the coast;’ for the Krooboy is more at home by water than land, and there is no surf in Africa big enough to drown him.

From too much ‘free trade,’ the Republican treasury suffers occasionally—to such an extent that a Gold Coast colonial surgeon who once cured several leading senators, and received a fifty-dollar draft on the Government, was, when he presented it, asked to wait a little, as there were then only five dollars in the exchequer.

However, when there is plenty to eat, the Krooboy stays at home, and by way of recreation organises a desultory war against the neighbouring tribes and the Republicans. Then he burns an outlying station or two, or crawling by night through the bush, fires a handful of broken pottery into some of the gaudily uniformed soldiers who are sent in pursuit of him, ‘to maintain the supremacy of a civilised nation over a barbarous race,’ as the coloured editors say in Monrovia.

Some few years ago it was decided that to ‘assert its supremacy’ in a becoming manner, the Republic needed a navy; but it is difficult to purchase a navy, or even one torpedo boat with an empty treasury. However, where there is a will there is—sometimes—a way, and eventually, what the papers called ‘the nucleus of our western squadron’ arrived. This craft, for there was only one, was something between a big launch and a small steam-yacht. Rumour had it she was a free gift to the Republic by an English merchant, but rumour is not always to be depended upon, and in any case, it would have been mistaken generosity.

It happened that about this time the Kroomen became particularly aggressive, and some of them having been fired on while embarking on a British steamer, before paying the Republicans for permission to do so, their leaders sent many insulting messages to Liberia. A council was therefore held, and it was decided to despatch the new gunboat with orders to burn all the disaffected villages along the coast.

With the greatest secrecy, a small Maxim and Nordenfolt gun were put on board the steamer, with a scanty supply of provisions. Some two dozen soldiers embarked, and a few days later the ‘armed cruiser *Goronomah*’ put to sea under sealed orders.

The same night that the gunboat steamed out of Monrovia a big ‘war palaver’ was held by the Kroomen in a village near the mouth of the Cavally river. The village was of the usual West African type; a cluster of ‘swish’ or mud huts, palm thatched, lying beneath a cluster of graceful palms. In front stretched a broad beach of yellow sand, where the long swell of the Southern Atlantic, curling over in glittering walls, breaks in ceaseless thunder and spouts of foam, while low forest-covered hills rose behind.

A large circle of Kroomen, naked with the exception of a narrow loin-cloth, three parallel

slashes on either cheek, and a broad blue mark tattooed down the centre of the forehead, which is the mark of the race, surrounded a fire of aromatic wood; for although the moon shone down with the clear radiance of the tropics, a fire is always essential to a 'palaver.' Some swayed themselves backwards and forwards, singing the song whose chorus is 'A ooh ah, Ah ooh ah,' to the monotonous tapping of a native drum, while others struck up the paddling chanty used when driving the canoes through the surf.

In the centre of the circle, however, with the red glow of the firelight falling upon their white hair and serious faces, between the whirling wreaths of scented smoke, the 'head-men' of the village held a consultation.

In spite of the distance, and the secrecy maintained at Monrovia, they knew all about the sailing of the gunboat, for the naked savage, by some extraordinary means, always knows what is happening along the coast. The traders say the Ju Ju, or Fetich man, is generally more to be depended on than the telegraph. This is not surprising, for in places where the latter is used, it is frequently found inoperative when most wanted, owing to some native blacksmith having cut out a few fathoms of the 'talking wire' to make necklaces for the daughter of a chief or hammered slugs for his 'Long Dane' gun.

After a debate of many hours, the plan of campaign was determined upon; the Kroomen dispersed, and put out the fire just as the first rays of the rising sun lit up the line of snowy surf on the beach and the swaying branches of the palms.

The next evening the *Goronomah*, after steaming all day parallel to a long line of golden sand and curling breakers, while thundering river bar, cottonwood forest, dismal mangrove swamp, and clusters of graceful palms opened out and drifted away astern, dropped anchor at sunset in a little bay not far from Cavally.

Seated in cane chairs on the narrow deck, the commander, lieutenant, and chief engineer, all pure negroes, educated in the United States or Sierra Leone, and got up in most gorgeous uniforms, smoked their cigars and chatted.

'To-morrow morning, chief,' said the commander, 'you will have steam by six o'clock, when we will go closer in, land the Maxim and twenty soldiers, and burn every hut of the town. Then we will shoot a dozen or two of the Kroomen—to teach them the respect due to the Republic.'

'So we will—you bet your boots on that,' said the lieutenant, who had commenced life in the United States of America.

Then, giving orders to the sentries to keep awake, and warn them if any canoes approached, the three officers went below, leaving the deck to the soldiers and seamen, who always slept there, as there was no room for them anywhere else.

Now the genuine African savage, uncivilised and heathen, is, taking him all round, rather a favourable specimen of humanity, although he has his weaknesses, such as a hankering after cannibalism and human sacrifice. He is always brave, cleanly, and, if treated fairly, to be

depended on, while in knowledge of the ways of the forest he is unequalled. The native, however, who is brought into contact with the semi-civilisation to be met with 'on the coast' is generally a weak-kneed creature, who will lie, steal, and take himself off when the least danger threatens.

So the sentries, after vacantly gazing round on the moonlit sea, which on the one hand stretched away into the dim distance, and on the other curling in huge breakers over a projecting reef swept in long swirls of foam over the glittering sand, went one after the other comfortably to sleep.

Then a silence fell over the vessel, only broken by the rattling of the helm as she rolled heavily on the swell, and the dull roar of surf on the beach; while the white fever-mist crept down from the hills, and rolled in ghostly wreaths along the bluff, over the palm trees swaying in the night breeze, and across the wet sand. Through the mist a long line of dark figures silently crept towards the beach, carrying the light two-feet-wide canoes, which will go through almost any surf, towards the water; then naked men, armed with sharp matchets, embarked and paddled out through the breakers. Had the sentries been awake they might also have seen a row of black heads spread over the shining water on the opposite side of the bay, as the Kroomen, gripping the leaf-shaped spear with one hand, swam vigorously with the other towards the steamer; but, as was their custom when on duty, they slept soundly, and saw nothing.

Once the commander half awakened, and looking through the port near his head thought he saw a splash in the water, 'Only a flying-fish or a herring gull,' he said as he went to sleep again.

A few minutes later black hands grasped the cable and the low rails of the vessel as she rolled down towards them, and naked, dripping forms swung themselves over the bulwarks, and stood for a few moments to recover breath, with the moonlight shining on their spears. Still the sleepers rested, unconscious of danger, until wakened by the well-known Kroomboy shout they saw their foes standing over them, and many, without a struggle, were hurled into the water; for the Krooman, as a rule, is not fond of useless bloodshed.

Roused from their peaceful sleep, the three officers rushed up the after-companion only to see a desperate fight going on forward, where a swarm of naked savages were spearing their men or driving them overboard, while a few hundred yards away a fleet of canoes waited to carry off the plunder when the steamer was taken.

As luck would have it, all the arms were forward, with the Maxim gun, beneath the deck on which the Kroomen fought, and the sentries and their rifles had been tossed into the sea already. Calling the lieutenant to aid him, the commander stepped behind the shield of the Nordenfelt gun and swung it forward; gazing down the sights, he lined the muzzle on to the centre of a struggling mass of naked skins, then drew the lever. 'Bang' went the gun, and the solid steel projectile tore its way through the

group, and out over the bows to ricochet from wave to wave until it sank beneath the bright water. But, while a row of men went down like grass before a scythe, the commander caught sight of the Republican uniform among the victims, and as it did not seem quite the thing to shoot his own soldiers, he swung the gun round until the muzzle rested on the foremost canoe. Then, waiting till the steamer rolled upwards on the crest of a wave, he drew the lever, and while the smoke drifted across his eyes, saw the shot crash through the frail craft, which upset, throwing its occupants into the water. 'Click, clank,' went the crank as another cartridge slid into the chamber, and as the report rang out, another canoe split into fragments, and the surrounding water was covered with black heads. Then, leaving the wounded to look after themselves, with a chorus of yells, whistles, and hisses, the canoes swept towards the vessel, while two or three projectiles whizzed harmlessly overhead, and threw up a cloud of spray where they struck the water. A few seconds later the Kroomen swarmed over the bulwarks; and the commander, fighting desperately with his sword, as well as the lieutenant and the engineer, laying about them furiously with handspikes, were driven back foot by foot along the deck till they reached the stern and leaped into the water. Shortly after the unequal struggle forward ended; every soldier who resisted was hurled into the water, and the remainder, bound hand and foot, laid on deck. Then, while a Krooboy, who had served as deck hand in the British and African service, opened the valve, the 'clink, clank,' of the winch as the cable came in link by link showed that the anchor was being raised, and a crowd of naked savages descended into the stokehole and engine-room. Here they drew levers, and opened cocks and valves right and left, with the result that in a few minutes clouds of scalding steam and boiling water were flying everywhere. As the laughing 'Frypan,' one of the leaders, told us afterwards, under the forecabin awnings of the *R.M.S. Angola*, when he had resumed his peaceful calling, 'The Lord not give them sense to savvy engine, plenty team, burn, and skin come off, too much. Krooboy live for get out dam quick.'

Meanwhile, the *Goronamah*, with clouds of steam pouring out of her engine-room skylights, drifted slowly inshore, the lieutenant quietly floating in the shadow of the ship, and the commander and engineer holding on to the rudder-chains aft, buried periodically feet deep as the stern fell in the long swells. As soon as all resistance was over, the assailants offered no further violence to the crew, who swam and floated around—for every coast African is at home in the water; but concentrated all their energy on looting the ship, and in half-an-hour had stripped her bare, and thrown the two guns and all the ammunition overboard.

Then, to make sure of their plunder before she struck, the canoes, loaded to the water's edge, paddled for the shore, while a swarm of naked blacks swam behind, pushing in front of them bales, boxes, locker cushions, and coils of line: in fact, everything that would float,

and doubtless got safely ashore through a surf which would certainly have drowned the crew of a European steamer.

Seeing that there was no foe left on board, the commander let go his hold, and swimming to the low bulwarks amidships, crawled over, followed shortly by the lieutenant and the engineer. It was high time, for the gunboat was rapidly drifting toward the reef, where her sides would crush in like an eggshell; so, throwing a coat over his head, the engineer descended into the machinery, and after a severe scalding managed to put things right below, and start the engines 'slow ahead.' Then the commander, grasping the wheel, turned the vessel's head out to sea, while the lieutenant loosed the prisoners, and blew his whistle to gather his men. Stopping a few moments, the crew and soldiers swam alongside and crawled aboard, and shortly afterwards the *Goronamah*, under full steam, rolled along over the moonlit sea, steering for Monrovia.

In the swish huts beneath the palms the Kroomen held high festival, washing down tinned salmon and sardines with exhilarating draughts of gin, vinegar, and Worcester sauce; while they spread tins of metal polish and patent rottenstone on ship's biscuits, and ate them afterwards with much satisfaction. They, however, regretted bitterly that the steamer had not driven ashore and enriched them for life.

All things considered, very little life was lost on either side. The Krooboy's treat the affair as a capital joke, and many a sable deck-hand tells the story, his face expanding into the merry laugh of the African, showing his splendid teeth, while he pretends to clean the brasswork beneath the saloon deck awnings.

In Monrovia, however, the journals could not sufficiently praise the commander for 'upholding the honour of the Republic against desperate odds,' and so great was the enthusiasm that enough money was raised to purchase a really smart little vessel, the *Yorktown* and so both sides were satisfied. A few negro women, however, by thundering surf-swept Kroo beaches and in the narrow lanes of Monrovia, realise that war is a cruel thing, as they mourn 'for the mariners who come no more from sea.'

WHEN SUMMER WANES.

WHEN summer wanes, and green is turned to gray,
The floral fires die out along the lanes.
A thousand glories hasten to decay

When summer wanes.

The sad-voiced wind blows chill across the plains,
And wet white mists trail inland from the bay,
While the last sheaf within the field remains.

On silent wings the swallows steal away;
Its leaves to earth the forest slowly rains;
Night's curtains close too soon upon the day

When summer wanes.

SAM WOOD.

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